CLAIMS

1. A system comprising:

a client computer to,

provide skimming level selection information to a user based on a plurality of available skimming levels, and

receive a skimming level selection from the user; and

a server computer, coupled to the client computer, to,

receive the skimming level selection from the client computer,

use a playlist of multimedia content corresponding to the skimming level selection, the playlist identifying segments, corresponding to the skimming level selection, of the multimedia content, and

provide, to the client computer, the segments of the multimedia content identified by the playlist.

2. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the client computer presents a user interface with the segments identified by the playlist.

3. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the client computer provides, via the user interface, an input mechanism through which the user can input a skimming level selection.

4. A system as recited in claim 3, wherein the input mechanism comprises a plurality of skimming level selection buttons.

5. A system as recited in claim 3, wherein the input mechanism comprises a rotatable dial via which a skimming level can be identified.

6. A system as recited in claim 5, wherein the rotatable dial comprises a graphical dial.

7. A method for providing a skimmed version of multimedia content, the method comprising:

accessing first skimming information corresponding to a first skimming level of a plurality of skimming levels of the multimedia content;

using the first skimming information to access a first plurality of segments of the multimedia content that correspond to the first skimming level; and

forwarding the first plurality of segments to a client computer.

8. A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the forwarding comprises streaming the accessed segments to the client computer.

9. A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the using comprises generating a playlist based on the first skimming information.

10. A method as recited in claim 7, further comprising:

receiving a selection of a second skimming level of the plurality of skimming levels from the client computer while the first plurality of segments are being forwarded to the client computer;

accessing second skimming information corresponding to the second skimming level;

using the second skimming information to access a second plurality of segments of the multimedia content that correspond to the second skimming level; and

forwarding the second plurality of segments to the client computer.

11. A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the receiving further comprises receiving an indication of a current presentation time of the first plurality of segments.

12. A method as recited in claim 11, wherein the indication comprises the presentation time referenced to the timeline of the multimedia content.

13. A method as recited in claim 11, wherein the indication comprises a current segment of the first plurality of segments and an offset into the current segment.

14. A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the forwarding of the second plurality of segments comprises:

identifying a current presentation time of the first plurality of segments;

identifying a time in the second plurality of segments that corresponds to the current presentation time; and

forwarding the second plurality of segments to the client computer starting with the time in the second plurality of segments that corresponds to the current presentation time of the first plurality of segments.

15. One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer program that is executable by a computer to perform the method recited in claim 7.

16. A method for storing skimmed versions of multimedia content, the method comprising:

identifying, for each of a plurality of skimming levels, a plurality of segments of the multimedia content; and

storing, for each of the plurality of skimming levels, skimming information identifying the plurality of segments.

17. A method as recited in claim 16, wherein the storing comprises storing the skimming information identifying the plurality of segments in a same data structure as the multimedia content is stored in.

18. A method as recited in claim 17, further comprising storing, in the same data structure as the multimedia content is stored in, an indication of how many skimming levels comprise the plurality of skimming levels.

19. A method as recited in claim 16, further comprising storing a specialized independent frame to be used to present a first dependent frame of one of the plurality of segments.

20. One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim 16.

21. A method for presenting a skimmed version of multimedia content, the method comprising:

accessing first skimming information corresponding to a first skimming level of a plurality of skimming levels of the multimedia content;

using the first skimming information to generate a playlist identifying a first plurality of segments of the multimedia content that correspond to the first skimming level;

retrieving the first plurality of segments from a storage device; and

presenting the first plurality of segments as the skimmed version.

22. A method as recited in claim 21, wherein the retrieving comprises:

transmitting the playlist to a server computer; and

receiving the first plurality of segments from the server computer.

23. A method as recited in claim 21, further comprising:

receiving user input identifying a second skimming level of the plurality of skimming levels while the first plurality of segments is being presented;

accessing second skimming information corresponding to the second skimming level;

using the second skimming information to generate a second playlist identifying a second plurality of segments of the multimedia content that correspond to the second skimming level;

retrieving the second plurality of segments from the storage device; and

presenting the second plurality of segments as the skimmed version.

24. A method as recited in claim 23, wherein the retrieving of the second plurality of segments comprises:

transmitting the second playlist to a server computer; and

receiving the second plurality of segments from the server computer.

25. One or more computer-readable memories containing a computer program that is executable by a processor to perform the method recited in claim 21.

26. One or more computer-readable media having stored thereon a computer program that, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform functions including:

receiving an identifier of a skimming level selected from a plurality of skimming levels;

accessing skimming information corresponding to the identified skimming level;

using the skimming information to access corresponding segments of the multimedia content; and

forwarding the accessed segments to the client computer.

27. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 26, wherein the function to forward the accessed segments to the client computer further comprises streaming the accessed segments to the client computer.

28. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 26, wherein the program further causes the one or more processors to perform functions including:

receiving an identifier of a new one of the plurality of skimming levels from the client computer during the forwarding;

accessing new skimming information corresponding to the new skimming level;

using the new skimming information to access new corresponding segments of the multimedia content; and

forwarding the new corresponding segments to the client computer.

29. One or more computer-readable media as recited in claim 26, wherein each of the segments multimedia content is defined by a start time and an end time

30. An apparatus comprising:

skimming logic to maintain a plurality of streams of skimming information corresponding to multimedia content, each of the plurality of streams identifying a plurality of segments of the multimedia content; and

a storage device, coupled to the skimming logic, to store the plurality of streams of skimming information.

31. An apparatus as recited in claim 30, wherein the storage device is further to store the multimedia content.

32. An apparatus as recited in claim 31, wherein the storage device further stores both the multimedia content and the plurality of streams of skimming information in a same data structure.

33. An apparatus as recited in claim 30, further comprising multimedia presentation logic to provide the plurality of segments to a client computer for presentation to a user.

34. One or more computer-readable media having stored thereon a data structure, comprising:

a first data field containing data representing a first skimming level corresponding to multimedia content;

a second data field containing data representing a second skimming level corresponding to the multimedia content; and

a third data field, correlated through the data structure to the first and second data fields, containing data representing the multimedia content, wherein the segments of the multimedia content identified by the first skimming level are provided in response to user selection of the first skimming level, and wherein the segments of the multimedia content identified by the second skimming level are provided in response to user selection of the second skimming level.

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